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**RETHINKING RELIGION THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL
APPROACH TO INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY OF UNDERSTANDING
RELIGION IN THE NAGA SOCIETY***Lemwang Chuhtwanglim*

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ABSTRAK

Di masyarakat, agama telah menjadi penelitian yang kompleks bagi disiplin akademik dan non-akademik. Pendefinisian agama telah menjadi isu sejak awal agama-agama dunia. Masalah ini akan terus ada di masyarakat, kecuali jika agama-agama dunia menghindari pendefinisian agama dari perspektif agama tersebut. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mempelajari tentang bagaimana agama telah didefinisikan oleh banyak sarjana menurut ilmu tologi, politik, budaya, kontekstual, dan bagaimana pendekatan berbeda tersebut tidak pernah mencapai kesepakatan pemahaman terhadap pendefinisian agama. Dalam banyak kasus, definisi agama dipaksakan oleh para sarjana yang memiliki pengetahuan dan kepandaian dalam disiplin agama-agama dunia. Kuasa untuk pendefinisian agama melalui perspektif agama-agama dunia menjadi tantangan bagi masyarakat pribumi yang terus melestarikan keaslian agama warisan dari orang tua mereka sampai hari ini. Agama yang telah didefinisikan oleh agama-agama dunia melalui perspektif transendental telah menyebabkan diskriminasi terhadap agama-agama pribumi lain di berbagai belahan dunia, seperti salah satunya orang-orang Naga di India.

Kata Kunci: *Agama-Agama Dunia; Agama Kristen; Agama Pribumi; Misionaris; Masyarakat Naga.*

ABSTRACT

Religion in society has been a complex study for both academic and non-academic disciplines. Defining religion had become an issue since the beginning of world religions. This issue will continue to remain in society, unless world religions avoid imposed definition of religion from the world religions' perspective. This research aims to study about how religion had been defined by many scholars theologically, politically, culturally, contextually, and how such different approaches never reach the consensus of understanding toward defining religion. In many cases, the definition of religion was imposed by scholars who have power of knowledge and intellectual in the discipline of world religions. The power of defining religion from the world religions' perspective becomes challenging for people, such as indigenous people who continue to practice their religion from the origin of their fore-parents until today. Religion defined by world religions from the transcendental perspective had led to discrimination against other indigenous religions in various parts of the world, such as the Naga people in India.

Keywords: *Christianity; Indigenous religion; Missionaries; Naga Society; World religions.*

INTRODUCTION

In the Naga society, religion is defined from the prototype of the American Baptist Christianity since 1872. I see this prototype definition of religion becomes a great challenge today in Naga society. Therefore, the research aims to develop a new paradigm of defining religion in the Naga society which can include other religious beliefs and practices existing in the Naga society. To support the development of the new paradigm, I will use Lorraine V. Aragon approach on definition of religion. For Aragon religion is the nature of deity or invisible forces, which include their character, manifestations, and behaviors toward each other and the living. It is the channels of ritual communication that takes place between the unseen powers and the human community and the channels of ritual communication are prayers, song, poetry, choreographed movements, oaths, offerings, blood sacrifices, rising smoke, meditation, fasting, pilgrimages, trances, and many other practices (Aragon, 2000:19). This theory will be elaborated in the concluding part of this article. Understanding religion in the Naga society becomes challenging until now. It has become a radical exclusive approach to define religion from a foreign religion which derived from certain part of the American context Gospel. It becomes an issue to see how religion which imposes from one context to another context makes despair and intricate in terms of social relationship both inside and outside the community. This article helps to fragment the social, cultural, political, and religious barriers towards attaining good relationship and value of each religion among groups of people in a society.

The study aims to indicate how and what influences the definition of religion among the contemporary Naga indigenous people. In this research, the comparison between understanding religion in the early Naga society prior to Christianity and after Christianity will be done. The two aspects of analyzing the understanding religion among the Naga people may include the historical study of colonialism concurrently associated

with foreign missionaries which played one of the significant roles upon religion in the Naga's indigenous world. Subsequently, it is possible to postulate that the predominant definition of religion from the major world religion, such as Christianity must have influence from the modern ideology of the Naga indigenous people politically and religiously.

I use anthropological approach to analyze the study of understanding religion among Naga indigenous people. This approach in this article will lead us to see how Naga indigenous people define and understand religion from their world view and way of life, and how Christianity defines religion which relinquishes from time immemorial of indigenous people in understanding religion. Moreover, the repercussion ascertains adversaries between the former and later definition of religion, among the Naga people that remains challenging. In addition, the induced adherents from different Churches among the Naga to escalate intra-religious conflict and violence.

In this way, this article aims to study how religion is defined in the context of the Naga people by the predominant Baptist Christians and other Indigenous religion, like Heraka and others. To analyze the study on development of understanding religion in Naga society, the research will make an effort to see the historical aspect of religious belief and culture among the Naga people in the early days prior to Christianity (NBCC, 1997:15). In order to see how the ancient belief and understanding of religion shifted to modern way of defining religion, the history of Christianity in the Naga society will be studied in this article. This study will enormously help the research to see the nature of development in defining religion among the Nagas in the east India.

Religion Theories

Like any other indigenous people in the world, Naga indigenous people had similar tradition, culture, and practices in the past until 1872 (Nuh, 2006:31). In terms of religion,

they believe in Supreme Being, the sense that He is above human beings and other being which controls the entire world (NBCC, 1997:15). However, the concept of Supreme Being among the Naga indigenous people does not imply to what Wilhelm Schmidt says that hunter gather people in the ancient time believed in something Supreme Being similar to God. Schmidt's approach to Supreme Being, a belief of the hunter-gathering people, always connote from the distance between people and the Supreme Beings. His theory is mostly based on the other world major religious-phenomenological aspect. However, for the Naga indigenous people, Supreme Being has no such distance from the people. It is considered from a cosmological aspect where Supreme Being lives together with the people and other beings around them. Even plants, animals, and others are a part of being that keeps people supported in different forms. It is more toward the concept of Supreme Being of what Jaimes says. Supreme Being is mostly referring to Great Spirit and this definition has no distinction between attributions to male or female. It has the dynamism of both male and female energies (Harvey, 2005:52).

Few Naga scholars have described that Nagas like Angamis, Aos, Konyaks, and Sema tribes believe and have faith in Supreme God. For Angami Supreme benevolent God is 'Ukepenuopfu', the creator with whom people would live after death. Aos is 'Mozing' who is the God of judgement like and 'Lungkitsungba', God of heaven. For Konyaks, 'Kahwang' is the supreme God of heaven and earth (Philip, 1999:37). In addition, according to Peihwang, Konyak people in the ancient time believed in Supreme Being called Youngwang Kahwang (Konyak Union, 2005: 63) and in Chen Loisho dialect, it is Hahwang Yuwan which means creator of all. In addition, they also believe in benevolent and malevolent spirits (Manhan, 2014:119). This Supreme Being is an invisible, yet omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient. Andrew Kulikovsky, one of the Christian theologians says 'omnipresent' is the

borrowed term from Latin that *omni* means "all" and *presence* means "here". It brings to the understanding of God is everywhere, close to everything, and everyone. His present is never ending and communicate with people at any time. The term "omniscience" is also the same borrowed from Latin which *omni* meaning "all," and *scientia*, meaning "knowledge." God is the knowest of everything, both Himself and all the things in the universe from the past, present, to the future (Kulikovsky, 2000:1&3). Christ defines the similar meaning that He is the narrator of full knowledge about anything in this world. He is also capable in describing of any future happenings simultaneously in different parts of the world. (Baldick and Chris, 2001:6). Omnipotence is also from Latin, *omni* mean "all" and *potens* means "power" and God is known as the power of everything or He has unlimited power to control everything in this world (Ibid).

This is how Konyak people believed in the past that Supreme Being is present everywhere on earth and the sky, the One who knows everything in everyday life and the One who has power than anyone else in the world. The Supreme Being provides the entire good things for people. This Supreme Being brings any social injustice practiced by anyone to justice and truth. During the harvest, festivals, and other traditional practices, they give attribution to the Supreme Being for a good harvest and every success. They utter something and this can be seen through the movement of their lips. For instance, Peihwang Konyak, a Konyak theological graduate, in his article contributed for the Konyak Union Souvenir (major organization of the entire Konyak) says, when Konyak people eat good food from their good harvest, before they eat food, the first portion of food is given to the Supreme Being who is considered to be with them everywhere and every time; this is done by throwing a piece of rice from their plates (Konyak Union, 2005:63). Hallowell approaches to worldview in terms of men's idea about the universe; his study of the Ojibwa's community about how they

see the world is different from the world religions worldview (Hallowell, 1960:19) is comparable among the Konyak people.

According to Ingold in *Rethinking Animism*, animism is not defined as the imputation of life in inert object like western society who dream or belief of finding life on other planet. Animism is not a belief on something away from the people, yet it is a belief of being that is alive around them which continually builds relationship. It is not an animation of being in object, yet a being which communicates with human being ontologically (Ingold, 2006:9). Similarly, the ancient Nagas practiced culture, tradition, and belief without making distance between organism somewhere outside them or environment in somewhere else. People believed that their way of life is surrounded by fellow beings that make them communitarian society. This belief and culture is almost similar to what Bird David says construction of local people of animism in terms of a interpersonal relationship with the ecological perception of environment and nature in general (Bird-David, 1999:66). This worldview about the Naga indigenous remained until 1872 and in some interior parts where Christianity arrived late, remained until 1960s. Kenneth Morrison, one of the renowned anthropologists, argued that there had been a false assumption among scholars in studying the comparative nature of religion of the Native American. Scholars have failed to study uncritically non-Indian religious categories without examining the perspective of the categories with Algonkian people. He calls such imposition of non-contextual way of thinking upon the insiders an *intellectual ethnocentrism* (Morrison, 2002:17). It is indeed true that foreign western missionaries, researchers, and tourists who visit Nagaland define Naga religion and culture. The imposition of foreign ideology among the Naga indigenous people in defining religion from foreign world will be analyzed in this article.

Understanding Religion in the Naga society

Religion in Pre-Christianity Era

Konyak Tribe

The oral history (unwritten history) signifies that before Christianity, Konyak people had names like Yonaa (Jonah), Aaron, Mosa, and few other names were similar to the Biblical names, thus, the Konyaks are related to the Old Testament (Konyak Union, 2005:26). According to many oral traditions and Christians missionaries among the Konyaks, their ancient belief focused in someone who was considered to be above anything in the world and they call him/her as Yowan. They maintained this concept, both as protector and destroyer of the world. They believed that this world was created by Yowan and every living creatures in this world was created by Yowan. For some people, 'Yowan' lives far away from them, above them in the sky. In this way, we can say that Konyaks understand in their religion that the creator of the world was based on their understanding of God or a creator who live above.

Having the notion of God above them in the sky, their prayers and other religious practices were done by looking up at the sky. Some people said they also called Yowan, means the owner of everything, as Hahwang. Hahwang was derived from *Hah* stands for "land" and 'wang' stands for "sky". According to these two meanings, Hahwang is translated as the creator of heaven and earth.

Naga indigenous people have its traditional socio-religious system in the past. Geertz says that there is no difference between religion and culture or religion and secular because his definition of religion is a cultural system. He defines religion as

"a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic (Geertz, 1973:90)."

Among the Naga people, one cannot distinguish between religious and irreligious persons in the society. People mostly live in a community of religion, where religion is part of everyday habit. True human being belongs to the whole or entire community which includes the ancestors and the creation. This approach led the people in the community to see that everyone should involve and engage in an active participation in their religious belief, ceremonies, rituals, and festivals of the community. Such tradition and belief did not allow any single person to live in isolation from the community. Thus, traditional religion, individual life and the community among the Naga people were inseparable. Like Naga people, there are also people in Ladakh, North India. For the Ladakh people, religion permeated all aspects of life, inseparable from art and music, culture and agriculture. People were deeply religious and in this way, one could not live separate life from religion and other activities (Taylor, 2002:977). Thus, Geertz talked about the definition of religion, both implicitly as feeling of presence and explicitly as the manifestation God. The power of God, which caused repercussion, was found in the ancient Naga community. This leads to another finding that in the ancient Naga society, their religion did not have a written scripture and creed. People practiced their religion in oral tradition; they had their wisdom and memory of spiritual performance without any written scripture, unlike the modern religions which have written scripture, doctrines, and so on.

In the past history even before understanding the existence of God, human being, starting from the primitive age, did not have the concept of divinity, but concept of divinity which developed and evolved in the history of religion from one generation to another. Bellah said that people in the past did not have the explicit idea of God and It did not exist in the evolution of religion (Bellah, 2011:104). Bellah's religious evolution says human being begins to relate rituals, stories, behaviors, and myths toward every individual in this world. Subsequently, the concept

of God emanates, develops, and changes to take place in religion.

In primitive religion, Bellah (1964:360) noted, "the maintenance of personal, social, and cosmic harmony and with attaining specific goods—rain, harvest, children, health—as men have always been". Even headhunting was practiced as a part of their belief for the Nagas. It says, earlier since the creations story, both men and animals had lived together in perfect harmony. According to history of the Nagas, headhunting derived as imitation of Lizard and ants. Lizard's children and birds were eating fruits from the lone tree and ants saw fallen fruits from the tree and then they devoured those fruits. Meanwhile, lizard and ants blamed each other for the fallen fruits. The two vowed to kill whoever was guilty. Eventually, lizard found her children were involved in consuming fruit. Then, the ants killed them by taking off their heads and carrying them away amid a great uproar. When men saw that, they began to cut off each other's head as well (Smith, 1926: 379).

There are some special treatments in bringing the hunted head. A Naga who brings the head of an enemy would also want to bring the soul of the dead person where they believed that the soul added to the fertility of the soil or the harvest in the village. This kind of action was well preserved and kept in the village. The certain stones, which probably derived from phallic, also brought fertility and the close connection between stones and enemy heads. Some tribes among the Nagas, like Sema, made offerings to war stones, before he went on a raid. The Lhota tribe hanged a head on the sacred tree above the fertility stones which were still kept in the village. The Ao hanged the head from a similar tree for a time. The Konyak tied the head to a monolith, and for every head which was taken, it was added a stone to an erection in front of the Ang's house (Mills, 1926:34).

The goal of salvation and world in rejecting religion were not in the primitive period. Primitive religion is not in terms of worship, like the world religions do, but it is called as ritual. One thing to understand the primi-

tive religion is there were no priests, pastors, ulama, or congregation, and there was no mediator between something called God and human being. People are involved and they participated in the ritual action. They became one without any distinctions among priests and congregations. In general, the Nagas had the similar concept of world view and they lived according to how they built a relationship through their daily life with nature and environment, than the modern concept of God. Therefore, to define religion exclusively from the world religions aspect which has literature, doctrines, scriptures, hierarchy of institution, worship house and so on, it would still unfair to understand and define religion from the predominant religious concept of God.

Ao Tribe

Another tribe that I would like to highlight is the Ao tribe in Nagaland. For Ao, the total or whole being of a person comes under the purview of religion. For Ao people, religion and the world like two sides of a coin. They have a belief that the entire universe is sacred and filled with Gods. Religion plays a significant role in elevating ideas and values as guiding principles of one's behavior. Religious concept among the Ao people was expressed in the form of symbols and rituals which influenced both individual and communities in communicating toward one's attitude in the world and fellow creatures. Every man expresses his/her religion through his/her own behaviors in both actions and reactions. It is said that religion in an individual's life is the prototype of religion in socio-cultural system. Every single person's religious knowledge guides and controls various activities, and becomes a decision-making in society like politics, social, and cultural system.

The Aos both in the past and present believe in the same god as the creator of everything. Whether to believe in one God or other concepts of god is still debatable among theologians, social scientist and anthropologists. It is said that Ao people have a nature of

naming different names to same God in different jurisdiction and situation. Eventually, they believe that this supreme God sees everyone and no one can escape from him.

Having many names of the same God and the creator of the universe, the Ao believe in one supreme God and the name is Lichaba. They called as 'Lichaba Ali yangraba Sangram', the creator of the earth including man and plants. Since then for the Ao people, God is always personal, controlling activity in the universe. This mysterious and overpowering, Tsungrem (God) remains powerful and cannot be reduced. It gives protection, security, well-being, and blessings.

Lichaba, the creator of the earth, is believed to be the creator of everything both on earth and in the sky. He is the Lord of the greatest influence upon everything and is responsible for natural calamities. Lichaba also bestows blessings and inflicts punishment based on the behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs of a person. The Aos perform a great ceremony and many sacrifices are done every year as offerings and prayers to Lichaba.

The Aos believe that there was a time when Lichaba began to make the plane areas unlike hill areas in Nagaland. During Lichaba's work, there was a voice from somewhere screaming "Enemies, enemies". Hearing such voice, Lichaba disappeared without completing his work in the plane land. Therefore, until today Ao people believe that the plane land belongs to neighboring state of Nagaland is a complete work of Lichaba, and the mountains and hills of the Naga people are the incomplete work. It remains as incomplete work as the loss of Lichaba after hearing the voice of someone as Lichaba did not want to be seen by anyone of what he did.

Another believe is the Lord of Heaven which the Ao's called Longtitsungba. It is believed to be the God of Sky. The Lord is the owner of everything above the earth like Sun, Moon, Clouds, and other things, such as tree, ocean, river, and so forth. They believe that the Lord live in heaven. There is also a belief that the moon in the past was hotter than the Sun. Since human beings could not toler-

ate and adapt the heat of the moon, people had protested the Tsungba, so Longtitsungba threw cow dung and darkened the moonlight which shines at night (Imchen, 1993:31-34).

Angami

The Angami people believe in supernatural power, as spirit which is known as the controller of everything in their world view. It is the one who knows everything in worship or belief that how God should serve and should be served. Supernatural force is believed to be the great influence in people's lives. The supernatural spirit plays a role of both good and bad. People believe that it can be challenged by people who have strong will power to challenge. For instance, an Angami Chief in the village lost his son, he heard about the accident of his son somewhere, a man began to challenge the spirit to come forward and fight with him if the supernatural had done the accident to his son.

There is another belief in *terhoma*, which is known as speaking and invisible spirit and it can be caught by people through certain ritual performance. This belief is similar to the Borneo people in Indonesia where spirit can be caught through some performances. Borneo people put up spears outside their villages to keep off small-pox; they believe that spirit of spears fight against the spirits of the small-pox when it attempts to enter the village. In addition, Konyak people tattooed their face to throw away the evil spirits, or the tattooed face considered as the spirit of mask to fight against the spirit of sickness.

There was another ritual during the time of diseases among the Angami people at that particular time in 1918, people in villages offered eggs and chickens were released in the jungle to substitute the human being attacked by the spirit. There were several rituals and performance practiced by the Angami Naga to attribute the one who they believe. The Angami people worship to its deities and during the worship, the arrival of some officials or older people are immensely important to the community. There are several rituals and beliefs among the Angami, but I will focus on

few things mentioned above which is considered as their main beliefs and practices.

However, the coming of the American missionaries blindly taught the Angami convert to consider those practices as evil and missionaries interpreted the Naga people as Satan worshippers. The mentioned spirit is believed to be a creator and this is considered as the creator of living beings than the creator of the universe (J.H. Hutton, 1921:177-180).

DISCUSSION

Understanding Religion after 1872

With the coming of American Baptist Christianity, a massive change took place upon Naga religion and culture from 1872. Since then, the definition of religion becomes a paradigm shift from tradition belief to western definition of religion. As Bell argues that the power of Euro-American culture in terms of education has made an enormous impact on many indigenous people around the world. Religion is defined mostly from a Christianity aspect (Bell, 2006:27) wherever Western Christianization took place, and Naga indigenous people is one among many indigenous people of American Christianization's movement in the 19th century. Today, Naga people in general have different understanding of religion from what they have understood as religion in the past. The modern definition of religion which is a Christian definition becomes the enemy of the ancient belief and culture. American Baptist missionaries brought Christianity among the Naga people in a way that religion is about the commitment to Christ, to the authority of Scripture, and to spread the evangelization in the world (Nagaland Baptist Church Council, 1997:37). Richard Niebuhr says in *Christ and Culture* that anything that people believe or practice outside the doctrine of Christ is against his teaching which provokes to stand against the ancient culture and tradition of the indigenous people (Niebuhr, 1956:43). Similarly, ancient Naga belief and culture are codified against the Christianity. This repercussion induces and precedes the authority of defining religion from transcendental per-

spective that anything in this world is attributed to God as the maker and creator of everything. In the Naga contemporary society, religion is defined in attribution to one God. The essentialism of world religion as Geaves discussed in terms of discretion of world faith with a rigid and boundary in beliefs, origins, and history, (Geaves, 2005, p, 79) is explicitly seen in the contemporary Naga society.

Rethinking Religion in Naga Society

Connolly says the problem of understanding religion among scholars emerges from the people who grow up from where religion is oriented in a particular religious background. Any accurate objective of understanding religion does not exist in their own rights and thought, but the account of religious phenomena and religious traditions become the starting point for people to understand what religion means (Connolly, 1999:1). Connolly's argument is acceptable in the context of the Naga people. Although Naga people grew up from the ancient definition of religion, the religious, and cultural genocide, were brought by the American Baptist missionaries in 1872 became the starting point to subjugate the ancient understanding of religion by the Christian prototype which leads to what Emile Durkheim says that there can be no religion without a Church (Ibid). This definition of religion needs to be fragmented and reproached; the definition of religion from interdisciplinary aspect. To fragment this religion prototype and to rethink religion among the Naga indigenous people, I will focus on Cox theory in understanding religion from human's behavior in terms of culture, practices, tradition, beliefs, and ontological aspect of world religion and indigenous religion. Rethinking religion is necessary in the Naga society, because there are few new religious movements emerging in the Naga society which for the Christianity in Nagaland. These new religions are cult worshipers, animist, heresy, and so forth. These differences between understanding religion among the early Naga people and the modern Naga people emerged according to American

Baptist Christian prototype; those religious movements are against the teaching of Christ. Therefore, believing in Christ is the true religious person or accepting Christianity is accepting true religion. For an instance, Heraka, an indigenous religion which is mixed from ancient Naga religion and culture, and Hindu religion among the Zelingrong community, one of the tribes in Nagaland is considered as cult worshipers (venerating someone's statue). Heraka religion is a belief in Tingwang which they consider as the Supreme Being. This belief integrates some rituals and sacrifices. Budha Kamei in his article of "Heraka: The Primordial Religion" is described Heraka as follows, *Heraka* literally means in Zemei pure and not impure. *Hera* means smaller deities; *Ka* means fence, or give up, to obstruct, or to avoid. Other sacrifices to gods should be avoided and Tingwang is the only one they worship (Kamei, 2013:1). The Zeliangrong people believe in the existence of one supreme God called Tingwang who is the creator of the Sun, Moon, Stars, Earth, Water, Air, Human, Animals, and all living things. Tingwang literally means the Heavenly God, or God of the sky, or Lord of the Universe (Ramkhui Newme, 1991; *Tingwang Hingde*, Haflong, p. 4; Kamei, 2001).

Another case study is the recent religious movement that is opposed and protested by the Konyak Baptist Mission Center. A woman, called Yahoi, started the movement. She is known as the revelation from God for those who adheres her initiatives. One may see no difference between the religious teaching and practices and other religious practices from the Konyak Baptist Church. However, this new movement is categorized to emphasize on the Old Testament Biblical teaching. The Konyak Baptist Mission Center and other churches in Nagaland believe that the Old Testament Biblical teaching is non-contextual in the New Testament Era, because the coming of Christ has abandoned the Old Testament belief. This theological approach among the Konyak Baptist Mission is seen as the continuation of the American Baptist Missionaries that religion mean only

believing in Christianity. This definition of religion is known to stand against the particular religious movement which led to burning prayer house and other worship places. For the Konyak indigenous people, the western prototype of defining religion made an impact to abandon the Konyak indigenous religion. Indigenous worship and other beliefs are codified as evil worshippers, anti-Christ, magician, spirit worshippers, or inviters and so forth. Such interpretation was made by the American Christian missionaries among the Nagas continued by the current Naga religious leaders became the most problematic and controversial teaching. The contrasting definition of religion between indigenous religion and Naga Christianity emerged due to the missionaries' way defined religion from Western world idea. It could be translated that the definition of religion among the Naga people was the Western construction than it was from the native Naga people. Robert Eric Frykenberg argues that Hinduism in India is a constructed religion (Theodore K. Rabb and Robert I. Rotberg, 1973). I argue that religion among the Naga people is the American Missionaries construction; a bias definition from America Baptist Christian idea. This American Baptist oriented in defining religion among the Naga people needed to be fragmented to redefine religion from ecumenical understanding of religion, based on consensus integrated ideas from both world religion and indigenous people.

In this way, this study develops a new paradigm of defining religion from integrated consensus approach (ICA) from different religious groups, such as world religion, indigenous religion, and minor religions are an urgent call which remain acceptable in the Naga society. This paradigm does not claim the final or absolute truth toward universal understanding or definition of religion. There is a limitation that one needs to consider that challenges will emerge in the process of developing this paradigm according to the context of the people in dealing with the definition of religion. However, the study helps people from different religious background

to broaden their understanding in religion from different aspects which includes in incorporating indigenous religion.

Panger Imchen, a Naga anthropologist in his *Ancient Ao Naga Religion*, argues that for the Ao people, the world cannot be separated from religion. He means that whatever is in the world is sacred and filled with Gods. This includes human being and other personhood, like animals, stones, trees, river, and so forth. Geaves also argues that religion in many parts of the world is a Christian prototype which becomes more exclusive. Similarly, Imchen argues that every individual life is a prototype of religion which relates to the socio-cultural system of the people and there cannot be one prototype of understanding religion. He also argues that if religion is define from one aspect of belief and doctrine like the way world religions are defined then ancient Ao religion will no more exist in the world. Imchen does not deny that religion has a system of belief and tradition which express in the form of symbols and ritual which influence one individual and this belief is communicated to the world of nature and other beings (Imchen, 1993:31). The Ao people belief that there is one big eye being, who sees and controls the world and that is God.

Unlike Morrison and Hallowell's world view about the Ojibwa people, Imchen concept of God among the Ao community is the one, who created the world and his name is Lichaba. On the other hand, as Morrison described Hallowell's approach to Ojibwa world view that for the Ojibwa people's dream and vision are always considered as having a physical body, but most of the time of this being are not seen, but only heard (Harvey, 2000:23). In the same way, Ao people cannot see Lichaba, but they can feel its presence. Lichaba is the one who bless and punish the people according to the attitude of the people toward him. Lichaba controls the earth by holding the earth in his two hands. Ao people believe that Lichaba created the plane area of a neighboring state and when Lichaba was in the process of molding the Naga hill into a plane area people began to

shout that "Hurry Hurry, there is an enemy who is destroying our land", hearing this, Lichaba disappeared without making the Naga hills into plane area. Therefore, Naga's hills today remain mountain and valley which are different from the neighboring countries. Imchen says Ao people believe the creation of human being in different ways. Some say that men/women were created by Lichaba, some say that they came out from stones, caves, lake, trees, or animals, some believe that women give birth to tiger and today there are people who have spirit of some animals who behave accordingly like animals behave.

Morrison says Native American people do not separate other being from human being in the form of object or spirit, in a similar way, Imchen says that in the ancient time, Ao believe to live together with tigers, trees, lion, birds, and angels in the form of eating and living together. Although Imchen did not elaborate the world view of the Ao community in a deeper way as what Morrison did, I could relate the world view of the Ao community to the world of Ojibwa world view in terms of people living together with another personhood. Morrison highlighted about the European Christians who blamed Ojibwa people concept of being as demon or post contact troubles.

Similarly, many American missionaries claimed and blamed Naga indigenous belief and tradition as demon worshipers and such missionaries' orientalism led many Naga to deviate from the ancient belief and tradition. Nagas resisted missionaries who endanger indigenous religion and culture, even to the limit of killing for those who were first converts. One of the chiefs of the village responded said to a missionary "Get him out of the way, a spy of the colonial company". Later, some people welcome missionaries as they propagated the gospel of peace and life after death that leads to heaven in forgiveness of sin from Jesus (Clark, 1978:11-12). Among the Naga indigenous religious belief, life after death would be rewarded according to his/her way of life before death without

forgiveness. This message became power to convert the Nagas, because there were less peace among villagers and life after death was unknown to them.

Woodward approaches to the world view of some parts of the Naga people is acceptable. There are different beliefs and world view, even among the Naga people that varies from tribe to tribe. Woodward's study focuses on both Naga tribes: Ao and Lotha. Based on Woodward's argument, these two tribes believe in the owner of the sky and the underground. Animal sacrifices were given to attribute the goodness of the owner of the sky who is believed to be the care taker of the people. If we go back to Wilhelm Schmidt's statement on the hunter-gatherers concept of world view, as there is someone who is known as Supreme Being above them, these two Naga tribes seem to consider the sky people (someone who is powerful lives in the sky) as the Supreme Being.

Wati Longchar, as a theologian in Naga tribal, describes that indigenous people consider land and nature as the provider of everything for their life. However, this land and nature are created by God and any activities happening on earth should refer to the creator. According to Longchar, indigenous people in South East Asia had the concept of God, but for Woodward, this God is considered as the sky. The sky is the superior power among the Ao tribe (Woodward, 2000, p. 223), because they believe that God lives in the sky.

At some point of time, even among the Konyak Naga people believe in three level worlds. First is the world above human being, second is the world where human being lives, and the third is the world below ground. The world above belong to the creator and the controller of the human being, the middle world is where human being lives with different beings that surround them, and the world below belong to people who died and the between world belong to people who are alive. Anyone who dies go to the world below and this concept is literally

translated from the way in which people are buried after death.

It is also true that few Naga tribes in the ancient period believe that people who died also have the same life like people who are alive. Therefore, they maintain a constant communication between people who live in the world and people who are underworld. There is always a communication between this two worlds. Ancient Naga people believe that whatever happens with the people who are alive always relate to the people who are in the underworld. Especially the older people who are considered as the great leaders in a village when they are alive. They are given high respect in the form of sharing good food and other sacrifices, like Woodward has mentioned in his book. However, one can debate with Woodward that headhunting and other animal sacrifices cannot be compared to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in the Christianity or there is no relation between attributing to Jesus Christ in Christianity and the animal sacrifices and headhunting practices among the Ao and Lotha Nagas. The objective of the sacrifice of animal and headhunting among the Naga people were not practiced as a ransom or offering to the dead people, like what Woodward has been mentioned. Killing animals was a feast to celebrate any festival and create varieties of food items during the feast than considering as a sacrifice to the dead people.

In addition, headhunting was the symbol of bravery and feast dedicated to the person whom they killed. People respect the head of enemies by giving the best feast, like cleaning it, kept in the best place according to the status of the person in his respective society. They believe when they are killing enemies in a battle, their spirit will depart in peace as they pay feast. There are certain facts in what Woodward described about the ancient Naga people's practices and ritual, but even among the Nagas, there are different worldviews and varies from tribe to tribe. Such worldviews need to be studied in order to understand the complexities of the Naga culture and belief.

Castro tries to bring up another perspective of how nature and culture function. I agree with Castro perspective to see how American Perspective Cosmology can be analyze to see how nature and culture can be interpreted or perceived by indigenous people in different part of the world between human and non-human being.

It is said that people in Amerindian, the indigenous people of Guyana, see the world being inhibited by sorts of subjects or person, human and non-human, and this ideas of course cannot be reduced to the concept of relativism. It is that many anthropologists have argued that the distinction between culture and nature understood in the context of the Western world cannot be described or imposed to non-Western cosmologies without understanding the life of the people.

One interesting approach to nature and culture between how animal sees human being and how human being sees animal is very intriguing to me. Based on Castro, human being sees human as human, animal sees animal as animal, and spirit sees themselves as spirit. He also says that animal predator sees human being as animal and in the same way animal as prey also see human as spirit or as animal (Castro, 1998, p. 470). In this case, he also says animals see themselves as human and human being as animal.

Castro's approach helps to see the context of Konyak people, especially grandparents who often said human beings are social animals who have close relationship to understand each other's act. For instance, a domestic animal, like dog, obeys human being in many aspects. All men know that dog does not have brain or the instinct of human being, then dog should not understand what human being says. When people call dog, it comes accordingly; dog knows when to stay outside and inside. Dog remains quiet during meal time and moves around after meal waiting for the food from the owner. There are dogs at villages, where many hunters keep with them to track animals in the forest during hunting time. It depicts what Castro tries

to say about the understanding between human being and animal.

Castro described the concept of nature and culture with a vivid example that animal drinking blood of a prey is like human being in drinking beers. For human being, drinking animal's blood and eating meat are a good food. Animals feel the same thing when they eat meat and drink blood of other living being. Drinking blood among animals is culture, and eating good meat and other food by human being is also a culture. The nature is the existence of all those beings that become a prey for each other. The interconnectedness of the thinking capacity between human being and animal can be seen as nature and the outcome of this thinking can be considered as nature. It is right, many of us understood nature in terms of what existed around us and culture in terms of how we associated with that nature.

Among the Konyak Naga, such cosmology is inevitable. Castro's analyses of the Amerindian, the indigenous people of Guyana cosmology can be related or found in other parts of the indigenous people. One needs to understand that there are several theories in understanding cosmology, such as Hallowell theory of analyzing Ojibwa people's world view, nature creates nature and culture without attributing to any transcendent or the Supreme Being. On the other hand, one cannot also expect or impose one single theory or cosmological aspect to be considered as the only authentic approach to analyze the entire indigenous world view. This multiple approaches are used by scholars to see the concept of animism in different context of the indigenous people.

I agree with Castro in one sense that animism could be defined or understood as an ontology which postulates or portrays the social character of relations between humans and non-humans (Ibid, p. 473). Ingold and Nurid may say that human being and non-human being cannot be distinguished as different existence, in terms of subject and object. However, it is also possible and logical to understand that even among human being

there are differences and likewise there are also an inevitable distinction between human being and non-human being that one needs to keep in mind. In doing so, it is also to be noted that like human being has a society, non-human being also has society and this is also highlighted by Castro that animism has 'society' of people and nature, as the unmarked pole, naturalism has 'nature': these poles function, respectively and contrastively, as the universal dimension of each mode, thus animism and naturalism are hierarchical and metonymical structures (Castro, 1998:474). Similarly, in fact, Naga indigenous people have had society since the embryonic existence based on their belief, culture, and nature with social norms and system were like in the Christianity era.

To define religion in the Naga people context, it is important to see the phenomenon of living and death prevail in all religions, then every major and minor religions has animism in it. The primal knowledge that needs to be focus in all religions to define religion is to understand that religion is a belief in the spirit of being. The spirit of Supreme Being, spirit of faith, spirit of God, spirit of supernatural being and so forth, inevitably found in all religions. This reflection of understanding religion as belief of being clearly shows that the ancient religion has no much differences from the world religion. I propose two aspects of understanding religion; first aspect is the nature of world religion that religion can be defined from transcendental point of view; second aspect is the way of anthropologist defines religion. Geaves has already mentioned on how religion in the Europe was defined from the Christian prototype; many world religions defined religion from their own religion prototype. My argument lays in how one should define religion in the society which should not marginalize others beliefs apart from the world religion. I would adopt Maarif's description in understanding religion in the context of the Ammatoa community in Indonesia. Ammatoa community understood religion in terms of relating to other fellow human beings such as living

and dead and other beings like trees, stones, plants, forests, mountains, rivers, house, and also invisible beings like gods and spirits (Maarif, 2012:13). Many indigenous religious practices in different parts of the world have been considered as animist, more in terms of something out of religion by the world religions; which repercussion to exclude indigenous religion from the definition of religion. Whereas for the indigenous people, what they practice day to daily life is religion like the way world religion understand them as religion. One problem why conflict between world religions and indigenous religion takes place can be seen in the case of Ammatoa indigenous people and Islam in Indonesia. Maarif reviews few scholars' literature that Ammatoa people claim themselves as muslims, mosque, and musholla are built in their place, but Muslims claim the Ammatoa people do not practice Islam, although they have claimed (Ibid, 54). Such claim, whether true or false, creates claim contestation between people who believe in world religions and people who believe in Indigenous religion.

CONCLUSION

Starting from the American Christian missionaries in the past, many followers of Naga missionaries, evangelist, Pastors, and other Christian theological have graduated constantly in defining religion from the American Baptist approach which is transcendental approach to understand religion. Missionaries often projected that Naga people did not have religion, therefore they came to bring religion. Things that are hard to be accepted from the Western and European missionaries are the orientation of the indigenous people in many aspects. For instance, Aragon says how American man greeted in Sulawasi—"Hi, I am John Smith of the New Tribes Missions. We work with primitive people who do not have religion." For many Western and European people, they imagine indigenous people do not have a religion, just because they have different ways of life and belief from the Western world. The Western's imagination, about what re-

ligion is, often sees the belief of indigenous people are religionless. How primitive were the people from Sulawasi and why missionaries pervasively codified that indigenous people did not have religion? Redfield says that there are no people in the past without religion and magic (Aragon, 2000:33). This is the common mistakes of the missionaries where religion exists, only if it falls under the category of defining religion from Christianity and Islam perspectives. However, Aragon begins in defining religion broadly as socially organized system of ideas, morally inflected relationships, and ritualized actions that concern powerful unseen entities. This approach is found in almost all religions regardless of major, minor, or indigenous religion.

It is such a pervasive to see Missionaries who always spread the belief of the tribal people in North East Indian including Nagaland where these people do not have religion. However, in reality, these tribal people already had had belief in the Supreme Being in many forms, such as a belief in Yowan (above all), Hahwang (God), and many other names attribute to anything that supports them in this world. These people also believe that Yowan and Hahwang are the creator and the sustainer of humans and the whole universe. They are believed to be loving and benevolent. The indigenous people also believe in secondary deities that they believe in the existence of malevolent spirits. Naga people also believe in immortality of the soul and life after death. They were many rituals, traditions, and cultural practices as well, where for them such practices are a part of relationship between human being and supernatural. People consider all the nature as something that provide life and support to each other, and through this way, they keep their religion (Ashram, 2006:2).

Many American Baptist missionaries influence the Naga religious leader in defining religion from Christian prototype. This brings people to draw a line between what is religion and not religion. Adopting the notion of religion from Western Baptist missionaries, Naga Church leaders approach

new religious movement within Christian denominations as non-religion or anti-Christianity which similarly stands as no religion. Zeliang says anything that comes in the Naga society whether modernization, world religions, and economic development should be brought over in tune with Naga indigenous religion, culture, heritage, arts and crafts, customs, and customary laws, and etc. (Zeliang, 2005:2). Naga people claim that the history of Naga indigenous people become the history of defeat from religious perspective where suffering and under oppression from the Western religion (Longchar, 2010:2). In the context of such oppression and discrimination from Western prototype, understanding the religion needs to be revisited and re-define religion according to the context of the Naga indigenous people, culture, tradition, and other practices.

There are three domains of knowledge that are relevant in understanding and what is considered to religion. First, religion is the nature of deity or invisible forces, which include their character, manifestations, and behaviors toward each other and the living. Second, religion is the channels of ritual communication that takes place between the unseen powers and the human community. The channels of ritual communication are prayers, song, poetry, choreographed movements, oaths, offerings, blood sacrifices, rising smoke, meditation, fasting, pilgrimages, trances, and so forth. Third, religion is also a concern with the preceding understanding and knowledge that human should behave among themselves to keep deities, God, or whatever valued, satisfied, and keep a balance among the belief. There are many elements included in the preceding approach to understanding religion like morality, social hierarchies, legal codes, calendrical taboos, gender role, dress code, and even ideological values of conservatism or progress (Ibid:19).

I agree that the preceding approach to understand religion among scholars, theologians, and other disciplines should be integrated, that is why no specific or such categorization of something outside world religion

should be avoided. Therefore, I propose that religion is a belief in both seen and unseen power, ritual practices, behaviors, relationship among human beings with other beings, attributions to any being as long people are attached to, way of life, and concept of God because all these elements lead to something that people believe and have conviction according to their own understanding about religion. This comes under understanding religion as believing spirit of creature which is found in every religion. One should avoid proposing that there is only one way to understand and define religion. There are multiple ways to understand and define religion according to different ways of beliefs. In this way, religion needs to be refined and understood among the Naga people and among different scholars, where religion cannot be defined exclusively from the world religion prototype, instead civil religion or the indigenous religion should be a part of what we call as religion for the common people.

In addition to Aragon, like Redfield's argument that every indigenous people had persisted from time immemorial. I do agree and believe that there were no primitive/ancient/forefathers people who lived without religion. People, in the past, had religion and magic in their own and people in the past also had the concept of profane and sacred (Redfield, 1954:17) which today it may be called as sin and saint or benevolent and malevolent. Fishing, hunting, preservation of forest, rivers, land, and many other practices in the past were a part of their religion which today many people continue to practice in relation to what they believe in world religion.

One problem with the leaders of world religions is the failure to see the important part of the way in which forefathers/foremothers lived with their own way of understanding what religion was about. Their problem with indigenous or fore-people are they did not have such as organized religious text, like the world religions have. Based on such documents, world religious leaders tend to draw a boundary between what is religion and what is not religion. This phe-

nomenon becomes a world wide spread and Naga people are not exempted from it. To this problem, people in Nagaland and around the world need to see religion from different perspectives and avoid a monotheistic approach toward defining religion. This scholarship helps both academic and non-academic disciplines in theories and praxis for researchers, lay people and religious leaders to broaden the understanding of religion contextually. It envisages wider perspective to avoid prototype and predominant authority of defining religion in society.

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